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Sirens

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Sirens

In the classical tale, *The Odyssey*, the Sirens do not make sounds similar to those of emergency vehicles, but they do present attractive hazards to the stories' hero in his progress towards home. In every use of the word, a siren is a sign of danger. An ambulance siren is an annoying sound, but it alerts us to a necessary movement away from a possible traffic accident. The Sirens in *The Odyssey* sang beautifully, but sailors who listened would forget their responsibilities and crash their frail sailing ships on the nearby rocks. For the sake of spiritual safety, we need to distinguish which "sirens" are warning us away from harm, and which are inviting us towards damage or injury.

The sirens we hear in our streets are hard to ignore, even if we are used to the sounds and only give them our full attention when we are in close proximity to some action that might affect us directly. Interior sirens are easier to disregard since their loudness and stridency depend partly on our openness to the information they might offer us. Just as we accustom ourselves to pay no attention to the background sounds of police cars, fire trucks and ambulances, we can build habits of ignoring the warning signs that arise in our minds and hearts.

If we are driving a car or are a pedestrian at a street crossing, we want to keep alert to sirens as a protection for ourselves and for those around us. We do well to take the same reasonable care of self and others by valuing the "sirens" that warn us of the dangers inherent in some of the options we have under consideration.

If we reflect on some of our recent experiences, we will likely be able to recall occurrences of interior warning signs and the degree of our taking them into account, as part of our decision-making. For most of us, these sirens are not loud, unless we are struggling with an issue of great importance to our welfare or that of others. Rather, we receive movements that are like the looks that a good friend might give us implying an unspoken question, such as "Are you really going to do that?" The attendant feeling is a bit uncomfortable, just as an emergency vehicle's siren is to our ears, but it serves us as a warning. We do not have to listen, and we do not have to make use of it in deciding what we will do or say. But it is a real warning.

Some of the other internally experienced sirens are more like those of *The Odyssey*; invitations to speak or act that are both attractive and at the same time include a sense of risk. And the risk is not that of physical harm, nor that of disapproval from others, but of offending our own sense of what is

right for us in the present situation. Again, we are warned, but we do not have to give such notifications a place in our decision-making.

All sirens are warnings; the ones inside us are often the movements of the Spirit of Love offering us some gracious guidance.

Randy